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The Golden Generation

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Scarcity is not fate. It is engineered. So is abundance.

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I believe the universe is intentional.

I do not say this as something I can scientifically prove to another person, nor do I need everyone to share the belief. It is simply the conclusion my own experience of life has brought me to. I was born in a small village in Cameroon. Scarcity taught me gratitude. I grew up without my father, and through that absence I learned something about masculinity, responsibility and the extraordinary strength of a mother who carried both tenderness and authority. Later, life gave me opportunities I could never have imagined as a child, and then it gave me loss. I experienced the collapse of things I had spent years building. Then, across sixteen months, two ruptured Achilles tendons forced someone who had spent most of his life moving to become still. What initially looked like interruption became instruction. During that stillness, I read, questioned, reflected and became consumed by artificial intelligence, consciousness, economics and the systems through which we organise human life. Looking backwards, the periods I might once have called misfortune became some of the most formative periods of my existence. Nothing was wasted.

This is why I have come to think of life as both a movie and a classroom. The movie is the experience itself: love, ambition, friendship, fear, success, failure, birth, death, building, losing and beginning again. The classroom is what those experiences reveal. Again and again, I have found that behind what first appeared to be resistance was an invitation: toward greater consciousness, greater love, greater abundance and a fuller experience of being alive. Not necessarily toward the outcome I wanted, but toward something I could not yet see. Eventually, this changed the question I asked when life became difficult. Instead of asking only, "Why is this happening to me?", I began asking, "Where is this taking me?" That distinction matters because a single moment tells us very little about the trajectory of a life. And I believe the same is true of civilisation.

If we pull the camera far enough away from our present moment, the human story begins to look less like a collection of disconnected technological revolutions and more like a progression. For most of history, almost everything that determined the quality of human life was scarce. Food was scarce. Energy was scarce. Knowledge was scarce. Medicine was scarce. Transportation was scarce. Communication was scarce. Human labour itself was scarce. Much of civilisation can therefore be understood as an increasingly sophisticated attempt to overcome these constraints. Industrialisation multiplied human muscle. Electrification made energy available wherever infrastructure could carry it. Computers began multiplying our capacity to calculate and organise information. The information age transformed knowledge into an economic engine. Then the internet connected billions of people and created something humanity had never possessed before: an expanding digital record of ourselves, containing our ideas, questions, images, discoveries, arguments, languages, histories, desires and mistakes.

Artificial intelligence could not have arrived first. It required everything that came before it: electricity, semiconductors, computers, networks, capital, global markets, data, cloud infrastructure and eventually the web. Humanity spent thousands of years producing knowledge. The internet collected an extraordinary portion of it. Now intelligence can begin

reflecting that knowledge back to us. **We built the archive. Now we have built the mirror.** This is why I do not think AI is simply another technology cycle. It represents a deeper transition in the economic history of our species, because intelligence itself is becoming reproducible and increasingly inexpensive to distribute. Unlike a barrel of oil or an hour of human labour, software can be reproduced repeatedly without being consumed by the person using it. Intelligent systems can increasingly perform cognitive tasks across millions of interactions simultaneously. As those capabilities improve and their cost falls, intelligence begins behaving less like a scarce privilege and more like infrastructure. My initial writings on the Golden Generation described this as the transition from scarcity-based economics to intelligence-based abundance. But the truth is that abundance is not a reality for many; the first step is to **Raise the Zero**. Because the goal of AI cannot be to let a few extract our collective experiences, our lives and art, repackage them into a chatbot, and then charge us \$19 a month for access. What a waste of intelligence...

Technology does not determine what kind of civilisation emerges from it. We do. Capitalism deserves more nuance here than either worship or condemnation. Markets, competition, private capital and entrepreneurship helped create extraordinary prosperity. The desire to build something better than a competitor accelerated invention. The possibility of financial reward mobilised capital toward risk. Companies coordinated millions of people and resources across continents. Capitalism helped build much of the infrastructure that eventually produced the intelligence age. But every system contains an objective function. For the corporation, that objective has largely been shareholder value. For the nation, one of the dominant measurements became gross domestic product. Those objectives produced enormous progress, but they also created profound blind spots. A system can increase GDP while 1.3 billion people become lonelier.¹ A platform can increase revenue while 45% of its users report feeling addicted to their phones.² A healthcare system can expand economically while the population it serves becomes less healthy. A company can optimise engagement while quietly degrading the attention of millions. We became extraordinarily sophisticated at measuring economic activity without becoming equally sophisticated at asking whether that activity was actually improving human life.

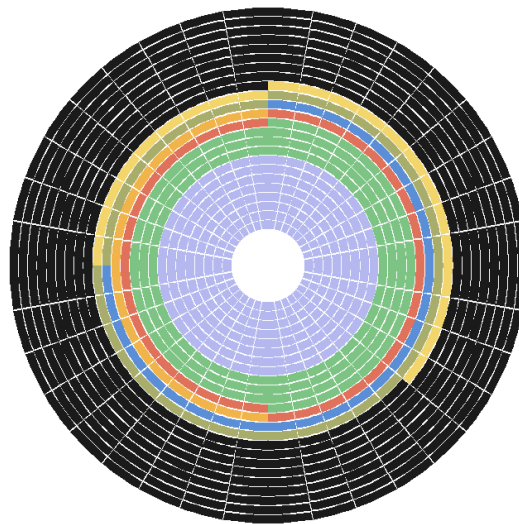
And the consequences are becoming impossible to ignore: 66% of workers report experiencing burnout,³ while 970 million people live with a mental disorder.⁴ These are not isolated failures. They are signals of a system reaching its limits. And perhaps our task is no longer to save that system at all costs. Perhaps we must be willing to let parts of it collapse so that something more human can emerge in their place. Not simply for ourselves, but for the generation coming after us, a generation on course to spend an extraordinary share of its life (36% of their adult lives)⁵ looking at screens rather than fully inhabiting the world around it. We built an extractive system to take value from the earth, from labour, from attention and, eventually, from consciousness itself. We pushed that logic so far that the system is no longer merely extracting resources from life; it is extracting the very experience of being alive. The challenge of our generation is to reverse that equation: to build systems that do not consume human life in the pursuit of growth, but use progress, technology and intelligence to give

more life back to humanity.

WHERE THE TIME GOES

An 18-year-old has 864 months left.

Where they go if today's screen habits hold. One cell is a month, one ring is three years, from the centre out.



311 months on screens.

26 years, 36% of an adult life, at 8 h 39 min a day.

● Sleep 288	● Work + school 126	● Eating 36	● Driving 18
● Hygiene 27	● Chores 36	● Free time 22	● Screens 311

Where the time goes: the 864 months between 18 and 90, if today's screen habits hold. Details in note 6.

This is where I believe the next great transition begins. The question of the intelligence age cannot merely be how much more we can produce. It must become: **what are the conditions under which a human being can flourish?** Once that becomes the objective, the design of our systems changes. Healthcare is no longer merely about treating illness; it becomes about protecting vitality. Education is no longer primarily a pipeline toward employment; it becomes infrastructure for curiosity, capability and self discovery. Housing is not simply an asset class; at its foundation it is shelter, stability and dignity. Technology is no longer successful merely because it captures attention; it succeeds when it expands agency. Economic policy is no longer evaluated solely by how quickly an economy grows, but also by whether people are healthier, safer, freer, more connected and more capable of participating in the future being created around them. In my earlier work on systems design, I reduced this to one question: **does this reduce unnecessary suffering and expand the human capacity to experience life fully?**

This is what I mean by **engineering abundance**. I do not mean pretending physical constraints have disappeared. Land remains finite. Energy requires infrastructure. Hospitals need doctors, equipment and buildings. Houses still require materials and labour. Abundance is not

the childish belief that everything can become infinite. It is the recognition that many forms of suffering we currently accept are no longer inevitable consequences of nature. They are consequences of design, coordination, incentives and allocation. We already possess extraordinary resources. What we often lack is the intelligence to coordinate them around human outcomes. A modern country can know how many hospital beds exist, where housing demand is rising, which buildings are underused, where energy is being wasted, which communities lack doctors and where infrastructure investment would produce the greatest improvement in quality of life. AI can make those systems increasingly predictive rather than reactive, while humans remain accountable for the decisions. Digital twins can allow governments to simulate interventions before billions are spent. Transparent public ledgers can allow citizens to see where money went and whether promised outcomes were delivered. Privacy preserving data systems can reveal collective needs without turning citizens into objects of surveillance. Markets can continue producing competition and innovation above a guaranteed foundation. The point is not to abolish markets. It is to become much clearer about what should never depend entirely on someone's ability to survive them.

We already have fragments of this philosophy operating successfully around the world. Some Nordic economies demonstrate how competitive markets can coexist with strong social foundations. Sovereign investment models demonstrate another important principle: a society can own productive capital and allow the returns from that capital to support future generations. This becomes even more interesting in an intelligence economy. If AI eventually contributes enormous amounts of productive capacity, why should citizens participate only as displaced workers or consumers? Why could they not also participate as owners? Public investment funds, citizen owned capital pools, pension systems, national technology infrastructure and other mechanisms can allow part of the productivity dividend to compound on behalf of the population. The architecture will differ by country, and there is no single ideological formula. The principle matters more: as intelligence increasingly performs economically valuable work, ownership of productive intelligence becomes one of the defining political questions of the century.

That leads to the idea at the centre of the Golden Generation: **Raise the zero.**

RAISE THE ZERO

Today, zero is too low. Fall far enough and you can lose your income, then your home, then access to healthcare, then stability, then the psychological capacity required to rebuild. When the floor of society is that low, freedom becomes partly theoretical. A person terrified of homelessness is not choosing work from the same place as someone whose basic existence

is secure. A child whose development is determined by the income of their parents does not begin the race from the same starting line as everyone else. A brilliant eighteen year old born in a village should not have less access to the accumulated intelligence of humanity than someone born into wealth. The purpose of raising the zero is not to make every human life identical. It is to establish a foundation beneath which we decide no human being should fall. Shelter. Essential healthcare. Education. Nutrition. Connectivity. Access to intelligence. The basic infrastructure required to participate in modern civilisation. Above that foundation, people can still build, compete, invent, earn, own, risk, create extraordinary companies and become extraordinarily wealthy. The ceiling remains open. **We simply raise the floor.**

This is not only a moral argument. It may become an economic necessity. I once had a deep conversation with one of my investors, one of the most successful hedge fund managers in Britain, about where artificial intelligence was taking the economy. We arrived at a simple but uncomfortable conclusion: eventually, the economic model built around selling human hours cannot remain the organising principle of society. As he rightfully said: **"Hourly paid work is dead"**. We can debate whether that transition takes ten years, twenty years or much longer. We can debate which professions change first and which remain deeply human. But the direction matters. If increasingly capable intelligence can perform more of the work currently exchanged for wages, then linking a person's right to participate in civilisation almost entirely to their ability to sell labour becomes unstable. AI does not need to eliminate every job for this problem to appear. It only needs to change the bargaining relationship between labour, intelligence and capital enough that the old social contract begins to fracture.

And the disruption will not only be economic. It will be existential. Ask someone who they are and notice how often they answer with what they do. LinkedIn has turned this into a cultural language: ex Google, ex Meta, banker, lawyer, founder, designer, doctor. We have fused occupation with identity so completely that the disappearance or transformation of work will produce something deeper than unemployment. For billions of people, it may produce an identity death. If I no longer need to perform the task around which I organised twenty years of my life, who am I? If a young person can access personalised world class instruction from an intelligent system at almost no marginal cost, what happens to an educational system designed partly to certify access to knowledge? If knowledge itself becomes abundant, what becomes scarce? Perhaps judgment. Character. Taste. Courage. Trust. Curiosity. Presence. Imagination. Wisdom. The capacity to love. The capacity to create meaning. The ability to know what is worth doing when nobody is telling you what must be done.

That is why the ultimate purpose of intelligence cannot be to make humanity obsolete. **Existence is fundamentally an experience of consciousness. Human beings enter that experience possessing instinct, a capacity for love, awareness and creation. Yet much of life has historically been consumed by fear and survival. Technology therefore reaches its highest expression not when it replaces humanity, but when it gives humanity greater freedom to become fully human.** The prize of artificial intelligence is not artificial intelligence. The prize is time. Time with our children. Time with our parents before they are gone. Time to make art. Time to learn. Time to build friendships. Time to care for our bodies. Time to walk

without looking at a screen. Time to explore consciousness. Time to serve our communities. Time to discover what we would create if survival were no longer occupying so much of our imagination.

This is also why I worry about the direction in which we point intelligence. We have already lived through one version of the internet in which some of the most brilliant engineers of a generation were rewarded for learning how to capture another second of human attention. The business model determined the architecture. If the customer is the advertiser, the system eventually learns to optimise the human being on behalf of someone else. Artificial intelligence gives us the opportunity to reverse that relationship. Intelligence can work for the person. It can help us understand ourselves rather than manipulate ourselves. It can reveal the relationship between how we sleep, whom we spend time with, what we eat, where our attention goes and how we feel. It can become a mirror rather than a slot machine. This is the philosophy we committed to when building Lucie at RHISE AI: software that refuses to treat the human as an attention resource, but instead acts as a mirror, illuminating the quiet patterns of sleep, focus, and vitality while returning full agency to the person holding the glass. The compass should show you where you are. It should never decide where you must go. It should be a guide to flourishing, not a door to isolation and depression.

The same philosophy can move outward from the individual to institutions. AI can help coordinate resources. Intelligent software will dismantle and rebuild the service-driven economies of the past century, coordinating complex tasks at a civilisational scale. Blockchain and cryptographic systems can make certain forms of ownership, transactions and public expenditure independently verifiable. Digital identity can provide access without requiring every institution to hoard personal data. Open protocols can make systems interoperable. Public dashboards can make outcomes visible. Intelligent procurement can identify waste. Predictive systems can intervene before a person becomes homeless rather than paying more to manage homelessness afterward; before a preventable condition becomes an emergency rather than financing the far greater cost of late stage treatment. Technology will not magically produce good governance, and AI should never become an unaccountable sovereign. The important principle is almost the opposite: **the more intelligent our infrastructure becomes, the more transparent, auditable and humanly accountable it must become.** My systems work describes this as moving from reactive crisis spending toward predictive capacity management, with humans retaining responsibility at every meaningful decision boundary.

None of this future is guaranteed. The same intelligence capable of producing extraordinary abundance can concentrate extraordinary power. It can create a civilisation in which a tiny number of institutions own the intelligence, infrastructure and capital while billions rent access to the systems governing their lives. It can create unprecedented surveillance. It can make manipulation intimate and continuous. It can deepen inequality faster than previous technologies ever could. It can give us infinite entertainment while our communities disappear. We could possess the most powerful intelligence humanity has ever created and use it to make people click advertisements more efficiently. That is the Dark Age hidden

inside the intelligence revolution. Technology does not rescue us from our values. It amplifies them.

This is why I call us the **Golden Generation**. Not because we are special. Not because history chose us as superior to those who came before. And certainly not because we deserve some grand title. We are the Golden Generation for a much less glamorous reason: **we are responsible**. We happen to be alive during the transition. Our grandparents could not design the institutions of an intelligence economy because the technology did not exist. Our grandchildren may inherit systems so mature that changing their fundamental architecture becomes extraordinarily difficult. We are standing in the uncomfortable middle, old enough to remember the logic of scarcity and early enough to influence the architecture of abundance. That does not make us chosen. It makes us accountable.

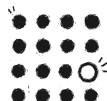
And this generation will need many kinds of people. It will need **Mirror Holders**, people willing to show humanity what our systems are actually producing and what we are becoming. It will need **Pattern Disruptors**, people willing to challenge inherited assumptions simply because "this is how it has always been done." It will need **Bridge Builders**, capable of bringing together technologists and governments, capital and communities, science and spirituality, generations and cultures that increasingly struggle to understand one another. It will need **System Architects**, people willing to do the difficult work of redesigning healthcare, education, housing, finance, governance and technology around better objective functions. It will need **Community Builders**, because no amount of intelligence can substitute for belonging. And it will need **Guardians**, people who understand that capability without ethics can become domination and who will protect dignity, privacy, freedom and human agency as our technologies become more powerful. These roles sit at the centre of the Golden Generation framework because technological transition alone is insufficient; civilisation also requires cultural, institutional and moral architecture.

SIX ROLES FOR THE GOLDEN GENERATION



Mirror Holder

You instinctively look for what is really happening beneath the surface, and you say it out loud.



Pattern Disruptor

You instinctively question the assumption everyone else has stopped noticing.



Bridge Builder

You instinctively look for the people who could solve it together, and you bring them into the same room.



System Architect

You instinctively look beyond symptoms and ask how the system itself could be redesigned.



Community Builder

You instinctively think about the people being affected, and about what would make them feel less alone.



Guardian

You instinctively ask who holds the power, and what stops it from being misused.

Do you see yourself in one of these? Four questions, one minute: find your role and join the mission at iamsamysam.com/the-golden-generation.

You do not need to found an AI company to belong to this generation. You simply need to be awake to the responsibility this moment places in our hands. You might be a teacher asking how intelligence can give every child individual attention. You might be a doctor redesigning care around prevention. You might be an economist developing new ownership models for an automated economy. You might be a policymaker making public expenditure radically transparent. You might be an artist reminding us what cannot be reduced to optimisation. You might be a parent raising a child whose education should prepare them not merely to compete for jobs, but to understand themselves. You might be eighteen years old in London, Lagos, Mumbai or a village like the one where my own life began, reading this and realising that the systems around you are not laws of nature. They were designed by human beings. They can be redesigned by human beings.

That realisation is important because scarcity has acquired the psychological authority of inevitability. We look at homelessness in cities containing enormous wealth and treat it almost like weather. We see children whose potential is constrained by where they were born and describe the outcome as economics. We tolerate preventable illness, loneliness, educational inequality and the exhaustion of millions of people, while possessing technologies previous generations would have regarded as magic. None of this means every scarcity can disappear. But it does mean we should become much more demanding about which forms of scarcity are genuinely physical and which survive because of incentives, coordination failures, political choices or systems we have simply stopped questioning. **Scarcity is not fate. It is engineered. So is abundance.** I keep coming back to this sentence because it captures the responsibility at the heart of the entire thesis.

Imagine what raising the zero could mean across a single generation. Imagine a child being born knowing that regardless of the wealth of their parents, they will be fed, sheltered, educated, cared for when sick and connected to the accumulated intelligence of humanity.

Imagine reaching eighteen without the first question of adulthood being, "How do I avoid falling?" but instead, "What am I here to contribute?" Imagine entrepreneurship when failure does not threaten destitution. Imagine education organised around discovering capacity rather than filtering people into labour markets. Imagine healthcare systems rewarded for keeping people healthy. Imagine technology whose economic incentives depend upon giving people back attention rather than consuming it. Imagine public institutions whose spending and outcomes can be inspected almost in real time. Imagine AI productivity producing not simply larger corporate margins but shorter working weeks, stronger public foundations and wider ownership of productive capital. Imagine millions of people recovering hours every week and investing some of that time into their families, communities, bodies, creativity and inner lives.

This is not a prediction. It is a direction.

That distinction matters.

I cannot tell you exactly what the economy of 2050 will look like. Nobody can. I cannot tell you when particular categories of work will disappear or whether universal basic income, universal basic services, social wealth funds, citizen dividends or entirely new mechanisms will become the dominant model. I do not believe our task is to pretend we possess that certainty. Our task is to establish the principles by which we navigate the transition. Technology should serve humanity. Nobody should be born merely to survive. Intelligence should give humanity back time. The gains from collective intelligence should not belong exclusively to a tiny minority. Human agency must remain sacred. Transparency must increase as systems become more powerful. And our measure of progress should increasingly become the flourishing of human beings.

If we can agree on those principles, enormous amounts of experimentation become possible. Different cities can try different housing models. Countries can experiment with social wealth funds and public AI infrastructure. Companies can build new forms of human centred technology. Schools can rethink what education means when information is abundant. Healthcare systems can move toward prevention. New institutions can emerge that we do not yet have language for. Some experiments will fail. That is fine. The intelligence age should not eliminate experimentation; it should make learning from experimentation dramatically faster. The goal is not to design one perfect central system. It is to establish a better North Star and allow thousands of systems to evolve toward it.

For me, that North Star is **human flourishing**.

And beneath it sits one immediate mission:

Raise the zero.

Raise the floor beneath human existence until survival is no longer the organising fear of civilisation. Then protect the freedom above that floor so human beings can explore just how much they are capable of becoming.

Perhaps this sounds impossibly ambitious. Most civilisational advances did before they became infrastructure. There were generations for whom universal literacy sounded unrealistic, electricity fantastical, flight impossible, instantaneous global communication absurd. We should be careful not to confuse the limits of the systems we inherited with the limits of reality itself.

Humanity has repeatedly demonstrated something close to magic when enough people decide that an impossible condition is no longer acceptable, and unite to build a more human tomorrow.

The Golden Generation is simply the generation being asked to do that again.

We are not here to worship artificial intelligence. We are not here to preserve capitalism exactly as we inherited it, nor to destroy everything that markets have created. We are not here to hand civilisation to algorithms. We are here to take the extraordinary tools history has placed in our hands and ask a more beautiful question about them:

How much more human could humanity become if intelligence finally freed us from organising so much of life around survival?

That is what abundance is for.

Not infinite convenience.

Not machines doing everything while human beings become passive observers of existence.

Not more consumption.

Abundance is the freedom to be present. To love deeply. To create without fear. To raise children with time. To care for our elders. To know ourselves. To serve. To explore. To build. To play. To wonder. To sit with another human being without needing anything from them. To experience consciousness with as little unnecessary fear standing between us and life as we can engineer away.

And perhaps, if the universe really is intentional, that is where this extraordinary progression has been taking us all along.

From muscle to machines. From darkness to electricity. From information to the internet. From the internet to intelligence. And now, perhaps, from intelligence back to ourselves.

We built the machine.

Now we must decide what it is for.

We built the mirror.

Now we must have the courage to look into it.

We inherited scarcity.

Now we have the responsibility to engineer abundance.

Raising the zero is the work of the Golden Generation.

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6. The chart is illustrative and deliberately conservative. It assumes a 90-year life, 8 hours of sleep and the screen use in note 5, then rounds the other bands to simple daily averages. The comparisons shown on hover are US averages for everyone aged 15 and over, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, *American Time Use Survey, 2025* results, table 1: sleep 9.0 hours a day, work and education 3.8, eating 1.2, housework, cooking and errands 2.7, grooming 46 minutes. Real life is busier than the chart, and screens overlap with work, study and leisure, so the bands show the scale of the thing rather than an exact accounting. bls.gov